

Mental Health Update

June 3, 2005

Blake's Name Goes to Standing Committees

More than a dozen qualified candidates applied for the position of deputy commissioner of health for mental health services, and all were ranked by the selection advisory committee, which developed a set of criteria for the position and used these criteria to create a screening tool. The top-ranked candidate, a clear favorite, is Acting Deputy Paul Blake. Commissioner Paul Jarris, after also checking the references on the number two candidate, an out-of-state applicant, held a conference call with the committee. Since the outcome of the process seemed definitive, it was agreed to end the selection process and to present the name of the top-ranked candidate to the state standing committees for their advice. Special meetings for each of the committees will be warned for next week.

FAHC Contract in Final Stages

A draft of the Fletcher Allen contract for psychiatric services at Vermont State Hospital is still being reviewed by the parties. Next step will be to have the draft reviewed by the Governing Body and the Secretary of Administration.

VSH Futures Group: Next Steps

Vermont State Hospital Future Planning Advisory Group reconvened the planning process this week. Acting Deputy Paul Blake led the meeting and committed the Health Department to ongoing work with the group through a regular schedule of meetings. The group discussed the process for continuing our work together and generally endorsed the idea of a series of working subcommittees for program development in the following areas:

- sub-acute rehabilitation,
- secure residential treatment,
- clinical care management, and
- inpatient services.

The group heard a more detailed presentation on program development work to date on the sub-acute, secure residential, and care management aspects, and it endorsed the general direction that this work is taking. On June 10, the Vermont Council of Developmental and Mental Health Services is sponsoring a meeting of all the local adult mental health program committees and the state committee to review the work so far and to offer feedback and modifications.

Transformation Grant Application Filed

Vermont application's for a SAMHSA Transformation Grant (see Update, May 13) was filed this week. Governor Jim Douglas selected Charlie Biss as the designated "dynamic leader" called for in the application. An indication of Vermont's ranking in the competitive grant process is expected in August. The grant application is posted on the Weekly Update page.

State Health Plan

The Vermont State Health Plan, 2005 is posted at <http://www.healthyvermonters.info/pubs.shtml#healthplan>.

Co-Occurring Disorder Grant Application Posted

The co-occurring disorder grant application, which won a \$3.5 million grant for The Vermont Integrated Services Project (See update, May 20), has been posted on the Weekly Update page. This application was submitted two years ago, passed over on the first round, but was funded this year.

Essex Psychiatrist Arraigned; License Suspended

Dr. Peter McKenna of Essex was arraigned on Wednesday in Chittenden District Court on three counts of Sexual Abuse of a Vulnerable Adult. In papers filed with the court, the Vermont Attorney General's Office charged that Dr. McKenna had a sexual relationship with a mentally ill patient for at least a year. Also on Wednesday, the Vermont Board of Medical Practice summarily suspended the license of Dr. McKenna. Under this order, Dr. McKenna cannot practice medicine without further action by the Board. No further action is scheduled at this time.

The Health Department has been actively working to assure that there is continuity of care for all of Dr. McKenna's patients. Staff have contacted insurance carriers, community mental health centers and many local health care providers to assure that all are prepared to help these patients through a transition and able to respond to any emergency needs.

In addition, the department has solicited help from the Chittenden Center and Central Vermont Substance Abuse Services to quickly see any of Dr. McKenna's patients who were receiving buprenorphine, for evaluation, short-term treatment and/or expedited referral.

The following information was released to the news media:

Vermont health officials recommend that patients of Dr. McKenna contact their health insurance company or primary care provider for referral to another provider. Patients who need immediate help should call the hotline at their local community mental health center.

- In Chittenden County - Howard Center for Human Services, 863-2400.
- In Franklin and Grand Isle Counties - Northwestern Counseling & Support Services, 1- 800-834-7793 or 802-524-6554.

Public Psychiatry Seminar Series

Todd Mandell, Nels Kloster, and Tammie Lowell will present "*Towards Full Integration of Substance Abuse & Mental Health Treatment at VSH*" on June 16, as part of the Public Psychiatry Seminar Series. The seminar will take place in the Medical Director's Office, Vermont State Hospital, from noon till 1:30 p.m. (bring your lunch). Those who cannot attend in

person but would like to join by conference call may contact Karen Vasseur (*kvasseur@vdh.state.vt.us*).

This series, directed by Vermont State Hospital Medical Director Dr. Tom Simpatico, is a collaborative effort between UVM College of Medicine/Fletcher Allen Health Care and Vermont State Hospital staff. The purpose is to provide public mental health professionals and all interested parties with a means of sharing their knowledge and expertise with one another.

VSH Census

The Vermont State Hospital census was 48 as of midnight Thursday night. The average census for the past 45 days also was 48.